



TESTIMONY OF
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AUDUBON CONNECTICUT

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

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Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society with more than 10,000 members statewide, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats through education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of people and the earth's biological diversity. Through our network of community-based nature centers, protected wildlife sanctuaries, and local, volunteer Chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 828 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE REVENUE.

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would like to begin by thanking you for your support of the Community Investment Act (P.A. 05-228) and express Audubon Connecticut's **strong opposition** to Bill 828 that seeks to divert funds raised by the Act that support affordable housing, historic preservation, farmland and open space conservation to the General Fund. The programs funded by the Act are central not only to ensuring a sustainable quality of life in Connecticut, but they also provide jobs and generate much-needed revenue for our state.

The Community Investment Act: Broad Based Support with Statewide Impact

The Community Investment Act (CIA) was passed into law in 2005 with broad support from the affordable housing, historic preservation, farmland and open space advocacy communities. In passing the CIA, members of the General Assembly recognized the importance of promoting investment in these programs singly and together as part of a comprehensive smart growth strategy for the state. Stakeholders and communities supported the legislation with the understanding that \$24 of the \$30 land recording fee it imposed would go toward programs in these four specific areas.

From October 2005 to September 2008, the Act raised a total of **\$69.6 million** in funds. Local municipalities have retained **\$11.6 million** for administrative costs and capital improvement projects, and a total of **\$58 million** has been remitted to the state, providing **\$14.5 million** each to the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (Affordable

Housing), the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (Historic Preservation), the Department of Agriculture (Farmland programs) and the Department of Environmental Protection (Open Space grant program). ***These funds have supported 330 projects in 130 cities and towns across the state.***

Impact of Open Space Conservation

The open space portion of the CIA funds supplement bond monies directed to DEP's Municipal Open Space and Watershed Matching Grants program. Since the CIA was launched, it has provided **\$11 million to fund 49 open space projects, protecting a total of 1,570 acres that otherwise would not have been funded by DEP.** CIA revenues also fund two staff positions in the DEP's Land Acquisition Unit expediting review of state land acquisitions and administering the Matching Grants program.

Economic Benefits of Natural Resource-Based Recreation

The programs funded by the CIA create and maintain jobs for a wide variety of citizens, including construction workers, farmers, and architects. An overlooked economic benefit of the program, however, is the benefits associated with open space and natural resource-dependent recreation such as hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching, primarily bird watching. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducts a survey of wildlife-associated recreation in all 50 states every five years. The results of the 2006 survey were released in 2008:

Participants in Wildlife-Associated Recreation in Connecticut:¹

- Total participants including hunters, fishers, and wildlife watchers:

	1.3 million
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- Wildlife Watchers:

	1.2 million
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- Bird watchers

	857,000
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- Expenditures including equipment and trips:

	\$873 million
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- Estimated Jobs Created²

	9,835
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For wildlife watchers, people whose principal motivation for spending or traveling is wildlife watching, expenditures include equipment and related items such as binoculars, cameras, wild bird food, membership in wildlife organizations, camping equipment, motor homes, trip-related expenditures such as for food, lodging, and transportation, and other items such as books, magazines, contributions, and land-leasing.

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. 2008.

² U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. 2008.

International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, National Wildlife Federation. *Fish and Wildlife Recreation: Boosting Our Economy*. Compiled from 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. b) *Sportfishing in America*. 2002, c) *Economic Importance of Hunting in America*. 2002. International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Protecting open space and farmland habitats that promote continued wildlife diversity in the state results in a number of *indirect economic benefits* such as crop pollination³ and the potential for new drugs and medical procedures. For example, horseshoe crab blood is currently being sustainably harvested from crabs in Long Island Sound for use in a medical test that detects harmful bacteria in medical devices such as heart valves, needles, and drugs that are injected into patients. At the same time, horseshoe crabs in the Sound are being fished aggressively for use as eel and conch bait, and the loss of the sandy beaches needed for their spawning threatens the future viability of this species.⁴

A Necessary Investment

These are difficult economic times and the Appropriations Committee is facing many tough choices. The Community Investment Act, however, should not be one of them. The CIA was created and has been implemented as a dedicated fund to support Connecticut's sustainable infrastructure by providing homes for working residents, promoting locally grown food, supporting family farms, revitalizing aging structures, ensuring a historic legacy for our children, and safeguarding the last clean, green spaces in our state that support a rich diversity of wildlife and provide a much-needed natural respite for people.

On behalf of the members of Audubon Connecticut, I urge the distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee to strike Section 1 (q) and (w), lines 78-83 and lines 103-107 of Bill 828 and preserve the Community Investment Act. It is a smart investment in a sustainable future for our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

